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A man who has attained high prestige in the community and, in addition, has taken the head of an enemy, is asked to join *Nokwi*, the highest stage of the yam cult, and he thereby receives the greatest honor that a Kwoma man can attain. If he is able to achieve this mark of status, the final mystery of the *marsalai* is unfolded to him. He is told that the booming rhythm that he has always heard at the *Nokwi* ceremony is not the footsteps of the great female *marsalai* in whose honor the ceremony is held, but is a sound made by a huge water drum.[28] A man plants yams for the first time on the occasion of his initiation into *Nokwi* and learns from the cult members how to solicit the aid and coöperation of the *marsalai*, which are believed necessary for a successful yam crop.

The yam cult, in addition to being a mode of ranking men in accordance with their attainments and of providing a means of gaining the support of the *marsalai*, is the primary institution for artistic expression. It has been shown how the child secretly learns to play the gongs, to sing, and to dance, and how during adolescence he is formally taught these skills, first in the bush house and later at the house tamberan. During adulthood men vie with one another in demonstrating their accomplishments in these artistic techniques. A man who is superior in one or more of them gains high praise from the community; people speak of him as a *harafa ma malaka*. At the beginning of each ritual the participants examine the carved wooden figures on the altar and comment on their excellence, those who have made them standing by to receive the praise. Men who are adept at carving may expend considerable time and effort fashioning and painting the formalized wooden heads and figures which are supposed to represent the *marsalai* of the cult, in order to have them so displayed.

Men who show a talent for gong beating have the opportunity during the cult ceremonies to play the most sophisticated rhythms in the orchestra, and those who excel in com-

[28] The water drum is a hollowed log shaped like a canoe, truncated at both ends, suspended in water so that the lips are submerged, and beaten by a pole wielded by two men.

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796 182 121 to be that it provides a means of artistic expression. Cult ceremonies furnish the chief opportunity for singing, dancing, rhythmic gong beating, flute playing, and the manufacture of carved figures. Numerous important integrative functions [554] are also fulfilled by the yam cult. It provides one of the bases for the social stratification of men, differentiating four prestige positions: boys who do not belong to the cult, members of the first stage, members of the second stage, and members of the final stage. The yam cult is closely integrated with head-hunting, in that only those who have taken a head can become members of the highest stage. [562] The yam cult excludes women and thus helps to define their status and to maintain the division of labor by sex. Through such exclusion it provides a socially accepted means for men to express their aggressive feelings toward women. [786] It also provides an opportunity for ceremonial license. Finally, the yam cult is associated with agriculture. The cult is thus an important institution, closely integrated into Kwoma culture, and to tamper with its charter by refusing to believe in *marsalai* is something which no pupil or teacher could lightly do.

121 182 796 821 [823] Beliefs in *marsalai*, in addition to forming part of the charter of the yam cult, provide an explanation for cosmic events and a means of controlling them. Bad rain and wind storms, earthquakes, and rainbows[17] are thought to be produced by these monsters. These beliefs permit a Kwoma to perform certain practices which are thought to control them. [782] In the first place he can avoid disturbing them, and in the second place he can utter an aggressive prayer which he believes will stop the storm or earthquake.[18] [781] Thus, both because beliefs in *marsalai* form an integral part of the yam cult and because they perform other functions as well, Kwoma teachers would be very loath to cease believing in them, even if events made them skeptical of their supposed powers.

[132] [17] Wind storms and earthquakes not infrequently destroy Kwoma dwellings and are thus seriously dangerous.

[18] It is assumed here that any activity in the face of danger is normally more reinforcing than passive acceptance, even though this activity is not effective in averting danger.